# History of Fairbury's Tarbolton Masonic Lodge

By: Dale C. Maley
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The history of Tarbolton Lodge 351 in Fairbury actually traces back to the birth of Scotland's most famous poet, Robert Burns, who was born in 1759. Mr. Burns lived in Tarbolton, Scotland, and died relatively young at the age of 37 in 1796. His most famous poem and song was Auld Lang Syne, often sung on the last day of each year. Other poems and songs of Burns that remain well known across the world today include "A Red, Red Rose," "A Man's a Man for A' That," "To a Louse," "To a Mouse," "The Battle of Sherramuir," "Tam o' Shanter" and "Ae Fond Kiss."

According to Wikipedia, Freemasonry or Masonry refers to fraternal organizations that trace their origins to the local guilds of stonemasons that, from the end of the 14th century, regulated the qualifications of stonemasons and their interaction with authorities and clients. Eventually, Masonic lodges were set up all over the United States.

Among our country's early Masonic leaders were founding fathers George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John Hancock. Throughout history, the Masons' diverse membership has consisted of emperors, kings, presidents, religious leaders, sports and entertainment legends, scientists, inventors, and statesmen, including 14 Presidents of the United States, 35 Supreme Court Justices, 17 Senators, 32 Military Leaders, and 13 Signers of the Constitution.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka railroad ran its tracts from Peoria to Indiana. By the time of the 1860 U.S. Census, the population of Fairbury was 269 residents.

On October 21, 1910, the Blade published an article about the 50th Anniversary of the Tarbolton Lodge. This article recounted that in 1860, nine residents applied for a charter to form Lodge 351 in Fairbury. Most lodges in the United States are named after the town where they are located. Two of the nine charter members of the Lodge greatly admired the works of Scottish poet Robert Burns, who lived in Tarbolton, Scotland.

One of these two members was Henry Remington (1820-1896). In 1860, Mr. Remington was 40 years old, and he owned a grain and livestock mercantile business in Fairbury with branches in Kentland and Remington, Indiana.

Lucius H. Nash (1823-1891) was the other member who admired Robert Burns. Mr. Nash was a Fairbury Constable who eventually moved to Chicago.

The new Lodge in Fairbury was named the Tarbolton Lodge number 351. The nine charter members of this organization were Aaron Weider, N.S. McDowell, Lucius H.

Nash, Henry Remington, Robert Rumbolt, Horace M. Gillette, J. B. Hulsey, O. P. Ross, and S.R. Roberts. The charter was issued on October 3, 1860.

On October 29, 1960, the Blade published an article celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Tarbolton Lodge. This article recounted that in the organization's early years, they met in several different businesses and residences. In March of 1875, a massive fire left Tarbolton Lodge practically bankrupt. All of their equipment, paraphernalia, records, and the original charter were lost in this disastrous fire.

In 1875, the members of the Lodge contributed $600 to build a new building at 114 East Locust Street, which would be equivalent to $16,928 in today's dollars. The balance of the money needed to build the new building was borrowed from the Bartlett, Beach, and Dominy bank in Fairbury.

The organization's new building was finished in 1876. The plan was to use the second story for Tarbolton Lodge activities and rent out the first floor to local businesses. In 1960, the first story was rented to the Bricker Drug Store and the Loy Ten Cent Store. The second story was redecorated in 1960 as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary.

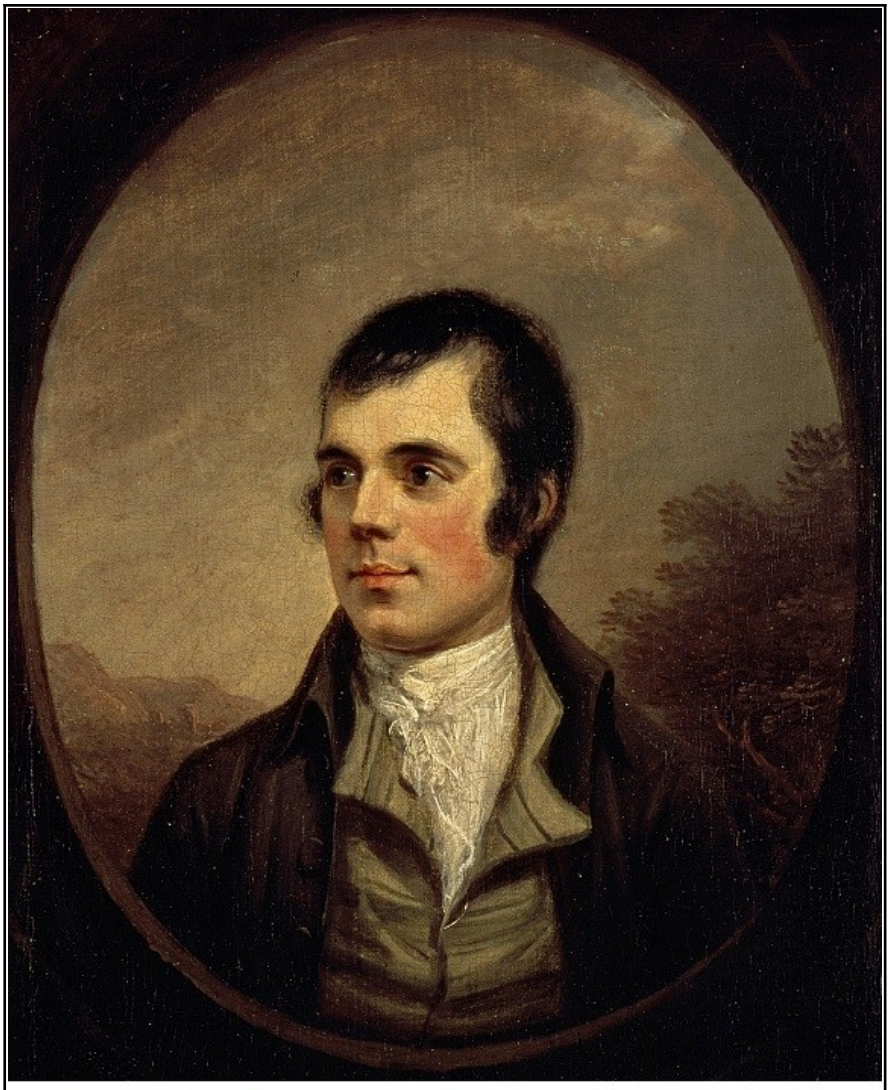
The Sanborn Insurance Company made a series of maps of Fairbury between 1885 and 1924. The 1885 Sanborn map shows the Tarbolton Lodge building labeled the "Masonic Hall."

Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 continues to be active today. Over the last three years, the Lodge has awarded over $8,000 in scholarships to Prairie Central graduating seniors. The Lodge loves to support young adults who are the future of the local community.

The Lodge sponsors golf outings to raise money for local causes. In 2023, Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 presented the Fairbury Fire Department with a check for $4,400.

The publication for Illinois Masonic Lodges is called the Illinois Freemasonry Magazine. The Winter 2024 edition of this magazine published a story written by Michael P. Wallace, a member of Fairbury's Tarbolton Lodge No. 351. The story is titled ***Why Tarbolton?*** Mr. Wallace recounted that Fairbury Lodge got its name because two of the charter members liked the poetry and songs written by Robert Burns from Tarbolton, Scotland.

Amazingly, Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 continues to be an active part of the community 164 years after its founding in 1860. You can access the Facebook page for the Lodge using the link: https://www.facebook.com/The.Fairbury.Lodge/. You can also learn more about Illinois Freemasonry using the link https://ilmason.org/.



1787 portrait of famous Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) who lived in Tarbolton, Scotland.